

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01
SY-05 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00 L-03 INR-07
INRE-00 SSO-00 AF-10 ARA-06 EUR-12 NEA-10 /082 W
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O 221845Z APR 77

FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6781

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: UNHCR MEETING ON ROLAND AND LEAP DAL

REF: A. GENEVA 2783, B. STATE 80153

1. UNHCR CONVENED A MEETING TODAY WITH ELEVEN POTENTIAL RESETTLEMENT STATES TO HEAR A REPORT ON AND GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THE CASES OF THE ROLAND AND LEAP DAL. ATTENDING, IN ADDITION TO THE UNITED STATES, WERE REPRESENTATIVES OF SWITZERLAND, THE U.S., NETHERLANDS, JAPAN, FRG, FRANCE, CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRIA. BELGIUM WAS ABSENT. THE MEETING, CHAIRED BY DEPUTY UNHCR MACE, HEARD VERBAL REPORTS FROM HOMER JACK AND ACRP-SINGAPORE REPRESENTATIVE MEHERVAN SINGH ON THESE TWO CASES, THE DETAILS OF WHICH ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR TO ADDRESSEES. IN ADDITION, WCRP DISTRIBUTED AN APPEAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO HELP THE 191 PASSENGERS REMAINING ON BOARD THE ROLAND TO BE LANDED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE FOR RESETTLEMENT PROCESSING, AND TO EFFECT TEMPORARY
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HAVEN ASHORE FOR THOSE ON THE LEAP DAL.

2. BOTH IN THE VERBAL PRESENTATIONS AND THE WRITTEN APPEAL, THE FAULT OF ACRP/WCRP IN CREATING THE PRESENT SITUATION WAS ACKNOWLEDGED AND UNDERScoreD. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE PLIGHT OF THOSE ABOARD THE ROLAND WAS SOMEWHAT LESS DESPERATE THAN THAT OF THE LEAP DAL

PASSENGERS, 110 OF THE FORMER HAVING ALREADY BEEN TAKEN BY AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, FRANCE, HONG KONG AND SWITZERLAND, AND MANY OF THE 191 REMAINING BEING IN A CURRENT STATE OF PROCESSING. FURTHER, EFFORTS TO RESUPPLY THE ROLAND WITH FRESH WATER AND FOOD-STUFFS HAVE MET WITH RELATIVELY FEW DIFFICULTIES, WHILE MANY PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED IN RESUPPLYING THE 254 PEOPLE NOW ABOARD THE LEAP DAL, INCLUDING MANY WOMEN AND CHILDREN. FINALLY, THE LATTER GROUP, MOSTLY LAOTIANS WITH NO STATUS AS REFUGEES, HAVE CONSIDERABLY DIMMER PROSPECTS FOR RESETTLEMENT ABROAD THAN THOSE ON THE ROLAND.

3. IN HIS PRESENTATION, SINGH STATED THAT ACRP WAS RUNNING OUT OF FUNDS TO MAINTAIN THESE PEOPLE. HE SAID THAT \$10,000 PER WEEK WAS NEEDED SIMPLY TO KEEP THEM AFLOAT AND THAT, WITH \$100,000 REMAINING AT ITS DISPOSAL, ACRP ESTIMATES THEY CAN PROVIDE FOR THESE PEOPLE FOR ONLY ANOTHER SIX WEEKS, INCLUDING THE COST OF FOOD. HE ASSERTED THAT THE LEAP DAL AT THIS TIME HAD NO WATER OF FUEL REMAINING, AND THAT WATER HAD TO BE MANUALLY BROUGHT ABOARD IN CANS. WERE IT POSSIBLE FOR THESE PEOPLE TO BE LANDED, SINGH SAID THAT ACRP COULD SUPPORT THEM IN CAMPS ON LAND FOR SOME FOUR TO SIX MONTHS. THE US REP INQUIRED WHETHER A STATEMENT APPEARING IN THE SUNDAY (LONDON) TIMES OF APRIL 17 ON THIS SUBJECT TO THE EFFECT THAT THOSE ON THE LEAP DAL HAD THREATENED COLLECTIVE SUICIDE IF THE SHIP WERE TO TAKE THEM BACK TO THAILAND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY. JACK AND SINGH DOUBTED THAT SUCH EXTREME MEASURES WOULD BE TAKEN IN SUCH AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EVENT. THE US REP URGED THAT UNHCR TAKE THE LEAD IN CONTINUING TO INTERVENE AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVELS IN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA TO SEEK AUTHORIZATION FOR THOSE ABOARD THE LEAP DAL AND ROLAND TO LAND IN ORDER TO AVERT POTENTIAL HUMAN TRAGEDY. SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING US, STATED THEIR MISSIONS WOULD SUPPORT UNHCR WITH PARALLEL INTERVENTIONS. THE GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE WENT SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT INTERVENTION SHOULD BE JOINT UNDERTAKING.

4. MACE RAISED PROBLEM OF PRIORITY TREATMENT FOR RESETTLEMENT OF THOSE ON VESSELS VIS-A-VIS 3,000 REFUGEES WHO HAD REMAINED IN CAMPS. TO THIS, JACK POSED QUESTION WHETHER, IN APPROACHING GOVERNMENTS TO PERMIT PASSENGERS ON LEAP DAL AND ROLAND TO LAND, SOME SORT OF "MIX" OF THOSE FROM VESSELS AND CAMPS COULD NOT BE MADE, ROUGHLY IN ORDER OF ACTUAL NUMBERS CONCERNED, OR ABOUT 8 TO 1. THE DUTCH REPRESENTATIVE FELT THAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD WORK THROUGH UNHCR EXCLUSIVELY TO CORRELATE HANDLING OF THOSE ON SHIPS AND THOSE ALREADY IN THE CAMPS. THE JAPANESE EXPRESSED HIS UNDER-

STANDING THAT THE UNHCR WOULD COOPERATE ACTIVELY IN
SEEKING A RESOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM AND IN WORKING
WITH GOVERNMENTS; MACE DID NOT DEMUR.

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5. JACK EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT THE UNITED STATES AND
AUSTRALIA HAVE A "SPECIAL INTEREST" IN THESE CASES IN THAT
THE ORIGINAL INTENTION, BLOCKED ONLY BY WCRP AT THE
GOVERNMENTS' INSISTENCE, WAS THAT PASSENGERS ABOARD WOULD
BE TAKEN TO THESE TWO COUNTRIES. SIMILARLY, HE STATED
THE NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, AND FRG HAVE SPECIAL INTERESTS
IN THAT THE PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS OF WCRP ARE
FOUND IN THESE COUNTRIES.

6. MOST HOPEFUL NOTE OF MEETING WAS VOICED BY FRENCH
REPRESENTATIVE WHO STATED SHE HAD JUST RECEIVED NOTIFI-
CATION FROM PARIS THAT GOF HAD AGREED TO ACCEPT TWENTY
ABOARD LEAP DAL WHO HAVE RELATIVES IN FRANCE (MACE LATER
TOLD MISOFF THAT FRENCH REP WAS CONFUSING PRESENT GROUP
ON LEAP DAL WITH THOSE ON ANOTHER SHIP, HOWEVER). JACK VOICED
GREAT APPRECIATION FOR WORK OF FRENCH AMB IN SINGAPORE.

7. COMMENT: NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, MEETING RESULTED IN NO SPECIFIC
COMMITMENTS, NOR DID UNHCR EXPECT THAT IT WOULD HOW-
EVER, IT IS HOPEFUL THAT BASED UPON REPORTS OF SERIOUSNESS
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OF SITUATION FROM THEIR REPS ATTENDING, AT LEAST SOME COUNTRIES WILL COME FORWARD WITH OFFERS TO ACCEPT SPECIFIED NUMBERS OF THOSE ON BOARD THESE VESSELS. ARMED WITH SUCH COMMITMENTS, UNHCR COULD APPROACH GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED WITH APPEAL TO GRANT TEMPORARY ASYLUM BASED ON ASSURANCES THAT AT LEAST PORTION OF CASE LOAD WILL BE MOVED OUT FOR PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT WITHIN REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME. IN THIS CONNECTION, UNHCR REP VOICED HOPE THAT POTENTIALLY US-BOUND REFUGEES ABOARD ROLAND COULD BE PROCESSED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. ALTHOUGH VISIT HOPEFULLY EVENTUATED WELL, IT BEGAN -- BY ACCOUNTS OF BOTH SIDES -- IN AT TIMES STORMY PREPARATORY SESSION, AT WHICH MACE ACCUSED WCRP OF ATTEMPTING TO WALK AWAY FROM PROBLEM OF ITS OWN CREATION, AND JACK COUNTER-ACCUSED UNHCR OF REFUSING TO SHOULDER ITS MANDATED RESPONSIBILITIES. END COMMENT.

8. FOR DEPT: JACK SAYS HE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH D/HA APR 25 BY TELEPHONE AND PLANS TO BE IN WASHINGTON APR 26 OR 27. SORENSON

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